

Theory notes

Naturalism has a revolutionary aspect, for it shows social conditions which the bourgeois theatre takes great pains to conceal. Also a call to fight is sounded, which proves that the fighters exist. But only in a second phase does proletarian theatre begin, politically and artistically, to qualify itself for its social function. The first phase shows that the class struggle does exist. The second shows how it ought to be conducted.

Brecht, (1935?) quoted by Lee Baxandall, "Brecht in America, 1935" TDR 12:1 (T. 37) fall 1967, p. 84.

The people who are so interested in building a Brechtian *film* culture have not asked themselves why a Brechtian *theatre* culture has not been established in the US, or the UK. The answer might help us understand the possibilities of a radical film movement.

We must be ready, too, to abandon a path that we have followed for a time, if it seems to be leading to no good end. Only believers, who demand that science shall be a substitute for the catechism they have given up, will blame an investigator for developing or even transforming his views.

Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle

The basic problem for radical media makers in our time is figuring out how you can make media which will help get people involved in political activity, which in turn will change their consciousness. And which in turn will increase their political activity. The relation is reciprocal and action/consciousness must be seen as symbiotic. How does motion start? From external conditions, or from the consciousness of the organizers, or from the consciousness of the grass roots? Or all? And in what way?

This can be thought through with US Newsreel as well as Michael Moore, with Yes Men or Adbusters as well as Gore on climate change.

Radical Form/Radical Content

Some people praised *Hour of the Furnaces* for its form without a clear concept of the politics presented. Yet the film is embedded within a certain strain of Peronism. This should demonstrate that while championing radical form, we should not forget to analyze the actual politics of a specific film. Is the main problem with, say, Costa Gavras his form (adaptation of the political thriller) or his politics? State of Siege uncritically supports the Tupamars; this is politically questionable to say the least. Similarly, the difference between Jon Jost (*Speaking Directly*) and Robert Krammer (*Ice*) is most essentially political, not a matter of

form. That Kramer uses a more accessible form alone is not decisive in judging his politics. And along the same lines, it is worth thinking of the situation of Frederick Wiseman as at best liberal, but capable--within certain contexts--of being turned to more radical ends, or serving more radical ends. You can do more with the boot camp film (*Basic Training*) to talk about what's wrong than what's right with that situation. While *Welfare* never rises to the level of a sophisticated socio-economic-political analysis, it provides the surface data. This is not all, but it is a start.